

Markets - Mentors - Motivation

Just like tired marriages – writing groups sometimes need to put passion back into writing.

When *Writing Right* went into a slump last year, we started to look at Markets, Mentors and Motivation. And please forgive us for bragging, but we are really excited about the result.

Membership leapt from 4 to 45 in less than 12 months. But the major result is in the publishing success rate.

THREE books published. EIGHT have signed contracts to be published this year. SEVEN further books have gone to publishers. And THREE have finished their books and are now editing. All in one year. That represents: 21 positive results with EVERY writer reaching set targets well before expectation.

There are no secrets for this magic.

Set TARGETS, learn MARKETING use MENTORS and MOTIVATE each other to reach targets.

Individual targets were recorded at the first meeting and reviewed each time we met. Most far exceeded targets within the first six months and we are celebrating.

Success attracts success - success leads to confidence - confidence leads to goal achievements. And if that sounds like the start of a motivational talk – it is. Because motivation is possibly the greatest asset for a successful writer.

Motivation is the driving force that makes us write a poem, polish a story or finish a novel. Motivation makes us go to writing groups, send our work to publishers and sit at the computer. Motivation is what gets us started and we all know that's the toughest part of any work. Deadlines and targets are great motivators. So we set targets. Motivation creates strong characters and successful writers.

TARGETS

Ironically most of us set ourselves modest targets. So there was no evidence when we set targets for the year in January, that targets would be achieved

by July. We believe that positive feedback and encouragement feeds the passion to write and most of us need that type of support. Monthly meetings are like deadlines, they are ideal for meeting targets, but seeing a mentor between meetings boosts extra enthusiasm.

Getting together at the SA Writers' Centre each month is twice the enjoyment if meetings have a mood of success.

Not everyone has to achieve a huge amount of work. Reading about writing skills, talking about writing, critiquing others' work all add up to advancing skills towards an achievable target.

Meeting in the SA Writers' Centre has another bonus, everyone 'feels' they ARE writers just by being there and it puts a stamp of professionalism on the atmosphere of the meeting. This is an important aspect of taking our writing seriously and treating the craft with respect.

MARKETING

All aspects of writing comes under the heading of marketing.

Checking to see if the plotting, characterization, conflict, pacing, point of view and hooks in a story are the first steps in marketing. Studying the library and book store shelves is part of understanding the market. Studying publisher websites and reading guidelines is an aspect of marketing. Sharing information at a writing group is learning about marketing. Marketing goes beyond just knowing the publishing markets, it also means recognizing the marketability of one's work and writing to the market, rather than spending years playing with a piece of work and not knowing where it will go when its finished.

MENTORING

A mentor doesn't to be a top writer. A mentor can be a kindly enthusiast who cares if your work is reaching a target, or a writing buddy with whom you can exchange work and discuss progress. A mentor is rarely a relative, mate or friend – they will generally say, '..it's lovely dear.' A good mentor gives constructive criticism.

Writing Right has set up a Link Line at www.yahoo.groups.writingright.com as part of the mentoring process.

The odd thing about the line is that whether the genre is romance, historic, erotica, science fiction or practical 'how to' writing everyone can give a good critique because they are looking at the structures of writing. And some

members have gone way out of their comfort zone critiquing erotica! Email gives us fast access to information about writing and publishing whenever needed and instead of waiting for monthly meetings. A monthly newsletter provides additional professional information about writing markets and skills. The easy communication enables us to build friendships and confidence in the dauntingly painful process of having work critiqued.

Enthusiasm, generated by success, made it possible to have a workshop weekend this year. We camped overnight at a Youth Hostel (fairly old youths!) and were able to saturate ourselves in writing craft without day to day distractions.

Writing in isolation can lengthen the process of writing, especially for new writers who haven't developed the disciplines of writing and established regular working patterns.

So we look at mentoring in the broadest sense with meetings based strongly around mentoring. This means understanding what each other is doing and where we need help. One may need help with editing, another with finding a publisher, another with plotting.

The growing strength of the group has enabled us to start a Short Story contest which closes on November 1 and this will lead to the printing of an anthology which will be launched at a conference in Kapunda in March next year. Kapunda writers are organizing the conference and Writing Right will support their planning.

We raise our bubbling glasses to all our successful writers.

